

Part 3: Analyze the Literature

The following excerpts are from a story set on a farm in Ireland. Two characters, husband and wife, are bickering over something that they have clearly argued about many times before. As you read, analyze the characters' traits, motivations, and changes.

from Brigid

Short story by **Mary Lavin**

"I see there's no use in talking about it," said the woman. "All I can say is God help the girls, with you, their own father, putting a drag on them so that no man will have anything to do with them after hearing about Brigid."

5 "What do you mean by that? This is something new. I thought it was only the bit of bread and tea she got that you grudged the poor thing. This is something new. What is this?"

"You oughtn't to need to be told, a man like you that saw the world, a man that traveled like you did, a man that was in England and London."

10 "I don't know what you're talking about." He took up his hat and felt it to see if the side he had placed near the fire was dry. He turned the other side toward the fire. "What are you trying to say?" he said. "Speak plain!"

"Is any man going to marry a girl when he hears her aunt is a poor half-witted creature, soft in the head, and living in a poke of a hut, doing nothing all day but sitting looking into the fire?"

15 "What has that got to do with anybody but the poor creature herself? Isn't it her own trouble?"

"Men don't like marrying into a family that has the like of her in it."

20 "Is that so? I didn't notice that you were put off marrying me, and you knew all about poor Brigid. You used to bring her bunches of primroses. And one day I remember you pulling the flowers off your hat and giving them to her when she started crying over nothing. You used to say she was a harmless poor thing. You used to say you'd look after her."

25 "And didn't I? Nobody can say I didn't look after her. Didn't I do my best to have her taken into a home, where she'd get the proper care? You can't deny that."

"I'm not denying it. You never gave me peace or ease since the day we were married. But I wouldn't give in. I wouldn't give in then, and I won't give in now, either. I won't let it be said that I had a hand or part in letting my own sister be put away."

30 "But it's for her own good."

Close Read

1. What do you learn about the wife's personality from the things she says to her husband? Cite specific statements to support your answer.
2. The **boxed** sentence gives one reason why the wife wants to put Brigid in a "home." What other motivation is revealed in this excerpt?
3. Reread lines 18–22 and 26–29. What do you learn about the husband's traits from the way he responds to his wife?